DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 177 239 UD 019 790

AUTHOR Napier, Shirley
TITLE Two Major Problems Plague Urban Education and Its Administration.
PUB DATE [79]
NOTE 6p.

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Administrative Change; *Administrative Problems; *Bureaucracy; *Educational Administration; Educational Improvement; Educational Needs; Educational Problems; *Educational Quality; Elementary Secondary Education; Human Relations; Organizational Effectiveness; *Urban Education

ABSTRACT

The bureaucratic model for administering urban educational systems is dysfunctional for a number of reasons. It adheres to a philosophical stance which addresses the needs of others than those it serves. It fails to address the human side of enterprise and is designed to maintain the status quo. Finally, it fails to deliver quality education so that each child can advance to the best of his/her ability. Needed is a commitment to changes in philosophy, in decisionmaking structures, in planning strategies, in approaches to training for work in urban settings, and in approaches to program implementation. (Author/EB)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

TWO MAJOR PROBLEMS PLAGUE URBAN EDUCATION AND ITS ADMINISTRATION

by

Shirley Napier

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY S. Napier

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

ED177239

This paper has two purposes: 1) to analyze two major problems felt to be uniquely related to urban education and 2) to suggest some sources of action to effect change.

One major problem uniquely related to urban education is the utilization of a dysfunctional model to administer educational programs to the major groups served by urban educational systems, minorities and the poor.

According to Anthony Downs' definition, urban educational systems as are all complex organizations, are systems of consciously coordinated activities of two or more persons explicitly created to achieve certain ends. To give order and meaning to the administration of complex organizations, there is usually, via a formal organizational chart, a hierarchical organization which is structured along the lines of a pyramid. This structure is commonly referred to as the bureaucracy.

Much of the literature on management theory recommends the bureaucratic model as an efficient way to address routine functions. However, Barnard, Bennis and others suggest that the bureaucratic or integrationist mode of organizing becomes dsyfunctional when the formal organizational chart is relied upon to accomplish organizational objectives and to promote organizational efficiency. The model is characterized by elements which oppose what Barnard refers to as "the human side of enterprise." The body of literature on organizational behavior tends to indicate that the principles around which the bureaucratic model is based place high priority on organizational goals and needs and ignore individual needs and group needs. This can readily be seen in the characteristics of the model as described by Warren Bennis. It consists of a chain of command and (1) a system of rules and procedures for dealing with

UD019790

all contingencies relating to work; (2) a division of labor based on specialization; (3) promotion and selection based on technical competence; and (4) impersonality in human relations.

This writer believes that as organizational behavior characterized thusly is filtered down to people who are already excluded, psychologically alienated, and oppressed, it takes on special significance. The Gesellschaft nature of urban society, i.e., a lack of kinship ties, cultural pluralism, unification of people by civil units and the prevalence of special interest groups, necessitates a different approach to management. Yet, the organizational behavior of the bureaucrary is adhered to in urban educational systems and the philosophical stance taken is defined in terms of white America. This stance is harmful in its reinforcement of what Thompson identifies as recurring themes in the lives of minority groups and the poor. The recurring themes include: alienation, anonymity, powerlessness, and disorganization. Toffler, Whitney Young, Jr., and President Johnson's Commission on Human Rights document the idea that urban educational systems mirror the attitudes, beliefs, and expectations of the wider society. In other words, the organizational behavior of urban educational systems is based on certain social norms and certain basic assumptions about people and about the city which serve to maintain the status quo and to produce homogenization, mass identity, and mass performance.

A great deal of evidence seems to indicate that the accepted social norms and assumptions which can and do perpetuate this type behavior might include such hypotheses as those listed below. The first three are taken from Daniel Thompson's book, The Sociology of the Black Experience. The latter two are quoted from Fran Trusty, Professor at the University of Tennessee, and from a discussion in a seminar on Urban Education. The hypotheses are:

1. Blacks are inferior to whites.
2. The poor are inferior to the rich.
3. Influence precludes powerlessness and anonymity.
4. Poor Blacks are happy.
5. The city is identified with cultural activities that the rich enjoy such as operas, museums, parks, etc.

Administering from such a stance, according to John Gardner, is nothing more than organizational dryrot. McGregor's Theory X (the hard approach) becomes the mode of operation used to control people's motives, direct their efforts, and modify their behaviors to meet the needs of the organization.

As this type of organizational behavior is imposed on those who are supposed to benefit from educational programs, a second problem arises which is uniquely related to urban education. It is the failure to deliver quality education so that each child can advance to the best of his/her ability. The current system of grading, tracking, and testing denotes the degree of emphasis placed on competition and excellence. Rather than allow students to compete against themselves, they are compared to others so that a system is followed which allows certain students to succeed and forces others to become failures. Ray Rist notes that quality education for urban educators means education which is deliberately organized to make children orderly, industrious, respectful of authority, and law-abiding citizens. This can be noted in the scarcity of programs where criterion referenced objectives are used. It can be noted in the lack of flexible scheduling, in seating arrangements, and in the degree to which students are not encouraged to participate in decision-making that affects their lives. Additionally, another dimension is added to the failure to deliver quality educational programs when consideration is given to how creativity is stifled. Nietzsche philosophies that the best way to corrupt a youth is to teach him to hold in higher esteem those who think alike rather than those who think differently.

Counseling and labeling are two punitive systems used to screen those students out who dare to be different. And, those who administer and implement educational programs for city youths are used as tools to support and maintain the status quo.

In a technological society where the pace of change is so rapid, knowledge becomes obsolete very quickly. It behooves educators to teach students how to know rather than what they ought to know. Based on this thinking, some future-oriented educational leaders are espousing commitment to change, a problem-solving approach to planning, and organizational development based on objectives. Newman Walker and Jerome Harris, two superintendents of large urban educational systems, suggest adopting a philosophical stance that is existentialist in principle as a starting point for correcting problems in urban education. This writer agrees because the set of assumptions about people which evolve are much more healthy as they take into consideration human needs as well as organizational needs. (McGregor's Theory Y)

Once leadership has committed itself to change and developed a set of guiding principles by which to operate, it is necessary to determine, with everyone who is involved in the change process, where the system has been, where it wants to go, and how it plans to get there. The object is to develop and maintain a constant attitude of seeking to improve, to question, to evaluate, and to be dissatisfied with traditional ways of managing. This objective would entail a next step which is staff re-education for managers from the top level down. Training should encompass such areas as T-Group training, management by objectives, conflict management, and humanistic approaches to management and the teaching-learning process.

A final stage is that of implementation. The key word is accountability for, it assures that there is no freedom without responsibility; it sets the

tone for effective and efficient operations, and objectives guide evaluation which should be a continuous process.

Some other specific actions that might be effective in correcting the problems include:

1. use of disposable organizations, e.g., Task Forces.
2. rotation of managers (principles, supervisors, etc.).
3. uniform system-wide policies but differentiated procedures that vary from school to school depending upon the needs and personality of each school community.
4. use of teacher corps interns.
5. involvement of parents, students, and other interested citizens in the decision-making process.
6. use of the community as a classroom.
7. fewer decisions made at the top levels of management.
8. innovative scheduling.
9. criterion references objectives.

In summary, the bureaucratic model for administering urban educational systems is dysfunctional for a number of reasons. It adheres to a philosophical stance which addresses the needs of a group other than the groups that it serves. It fails to address the human side of enterprise. It is designed to maintain the status quo. Finally, it fails to deliver quality education so that each child can advance to the best of his/her ability. Needed are a commitment to changes in philosophy, in decisionmaking structures, in planning strategies, in approaches to training for work in urban settings and in approaches to program implementation.